



## **HORIZONS of FRIENDSHIP**

### **CENTRAL AMERICAN FEMINIST NETWORK AGAINST VIOLENCE TOWARDS WOMEN COSTA RICA CHAPTER**

#### **TECHNICAL PROJECT REPORT**

#### **REGIONAL RESEARCH-ACTION COORDINATION TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN CENTRAL AMERICA**

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## 1. Project Summary

<b>Project Name</b>	Regional Research-Action Coordination to End Violence against Women in Central America
<b>Project Partners</b>	Horizons of Friendship Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women – Costa Rica Chapter
<b>Ultimate Goal</b>	Contribute to prevention, awareness raising and citizen action towards the problem of violence towards women in the Central American region.
<b>Objectives</b>	a) Contribute to knowledge creation on the issue of femicide in Central America. b) Contribute to the prevention of violence against women through the involvement of non-governmental Central American organizations and local citizens groups.
<b>Outputs</b>	a) A regional study on the factors involved in the cases of femicide at the Central American level; b) Dissemination and reflection events of the study results among key actors in five Central American countries; c) Educational presentations on femicide in two Central American countries geared to key government and civil society stakeholders; d) A pedagogical manual on femicide prevention and awareness raising; e) Training of 25 social promoters from five Central American countries on prevention of violence towards women; f) Grassroots activities and communication campaigns to stop violence against women, organized locally by the trained social promoters.
<b>Budget:</b>	US\$ 119,070.00
<b>Project Length:</b>	18 months
<b>Organizational Structure:</b>	a) Technical Committee b) General Project Coordination c) National Monitors d) Institutional Leaders

## **2. Key words**

Violence against women, femicide, research, political advocacy, training, development projects, Central America.

## **3. Research Problem**

“Femicide” – the intentional and violent killing of women (assassinations, homicides and parricides), based on the fact of being women, started to be addressed conceptually at the beginning of the 90s in the United States. However, it wasn’t until the end of that decade that it became evident that it constituted a social problem in the Latin American region, stemming from the violent actions against women that were perpetrated in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. The problem has taken on alarming dimensions, as much for the deaths themselves, as for the lack of intervention by the authorities and the impunity in which the majority of cases remain. (IIDH, 2006).

In recent years, the issue has gradually begun to be studied in Latin America, and particularly in Central America, where knowledge production is scarce. Thanks to the efforts of many organizations, especially of women, feminists and others involved in the defense of human rights, femicide is increasingly understood as a particular type of violence that is rooted within a broader context of gender-based violence. It is also increasingly viewed as a fundamental human rights issue.

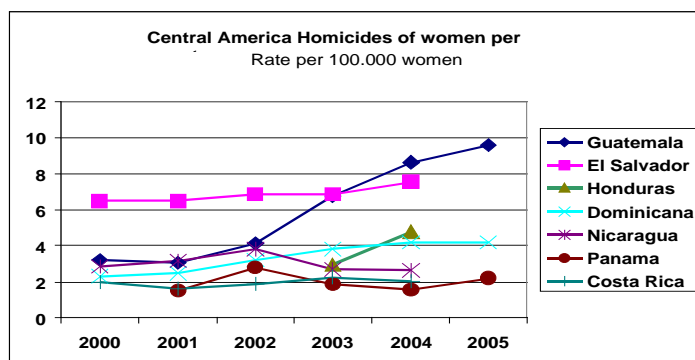
Assassinations of women in the Central American region have increased in recent years. However, it has been difficult to determine if the cases correspond to femicides given that, for the most part, official statistics do not provide a separate category for homicides or assassinations of women, with the exception of Panama, Honduras and Costa Rica, where the concept and term “feminicide” is already applied in official statistics. (Ibid).

In light of this gap, the Central American Feminist Network against Violence toward Women (The Feminist Network), decided to undertake research in the Central American countries and Panama. The aim was to analyze the cases of deaths of women that presented indications of being femicides, to obtain more elements in order to determine if they could indeed be classified as such and to have access to statistics that reflected the dimensions of this problem.

The ensuing research, published in the report “Femicide in Central America 2000-2006”<sup>1</sup>, was undertaken in seven countries of the region (Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and the Dominican Republic). The study finds that the number of violent deaths of women has increased in the last years, especially in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, and to a lesser degree in Panama and Nicaragua. The results indicate that not only have the number of femicides gone up, but also that there has been an increase in brutality in the way in which the women are killed, which does not commonly occur in the assassination of men.

An important finding in the research is that the sharp rise in violence against women is a recent phenomenon, beginning at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In all of the countries studied (with the exception of El Salvador which had a rate of 6 per 100,000) the rate of homicides of women that were recorded in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was very similar: between 2 to 3 for 100,000 women<sup>2</sup>.

Disturbingly, these figures have increased. For example, in 2006, 10 women for each 100,000 were assassinated in Guatemala while in El Salvador there were more than 12 per 100,000, that is to say, more than double the rate of that recorded only six years previously. Each year these figures increase. To put into context the magnitude of the problem, the World Health Organization considers that any health problem affecting 10 people out of 100,000 constitutes a pandemic for which an alert has to be declared.



Source: Femicide in Central America 2000-2006

<sup>1</sup> This research was completed by the Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women, with the support of UNIFEM, HIVOS and the Central American Council of Ministers on Women’s Affairs (COMMCA).

<sup>2</sup> Rates per 100,000 enable the establishment of comparisons between countries, as some have a greater number of inhabitants than others, and the absolute numbers, in this case of femicides, does not reveal the proportion of the total population affected.

Both in Guatemala and El Salvador, according to the research findings, homicides against women increased more rapidly than that of men. This is an indication that something is happening in these societies that is placing women at greater risk than in previous years. That is to say, that even though generalized violence is greater than in years past, the violence is not gender-neutral, but rather, is affecting the female population with greater intensity.

The report concludes that if immediate efforts are not made to eradicate this problem, the conditions that perpetuate it and the dynamics that bring it into practice could become entrenched and, consequently, much more difficult to tackle in the future.

In a 2006 study: the "1st Regional Report: Situation and Analysis of Femicide in the Central American Region", the Interamerican Human Rights Institute (IIDH) also drew attention to the increase in femicides in Central America. According to the IIDH's findings, despite the fact that governments do not have precise statistics on this phenomena, one can already see many commonalities throughout the region, including a lack of information about the victim and her relationship with the perpetrator of the crime; and a lack of coordinated investigation processes that would lead to trials and the effective prosecution of those responsible for the crimes.

In its study, the Feminist Network identified the need to go beyond a mere quantification of the problem, and delve much deeper into an analysis of the real causes and dynamics within each country that contribute to the assassination of women. If we do not know why this is happening, we will not have the conditions to effectively confront this problem.

This need, identified by the Feminist Network, was also mentioned in the IIDH (2006) report, in which it states, *"It is indispensable to know the causes that generate the killing of women at a regional level and the factors influencing it, as this is the way to propose solutions and [ensure] that it will be dealt with from a social perspective within the national agendas ..."*.

The diverse "scenarios" in which femicides are being produced, are increasingly complex, due to the social changes happening within the region. Within this context, one can see the emergence of new actors, such as mafias, gangs, and international networks engaged in sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Meanwhile other "traditional" actors

associated with femicides persist, such as police, military and paramilitary bands that act locally and occasionally connect with international networks.

The project that was undertaken contributed to the generation of knowledge that will sustain decision-making at various levels, and to the development of Central American research on the social dynamics that contribute to femicides. The results of the research were presented in December 2009 to the Central American Council of Ministers on Women's Affairs (*Consejo de Ministras de la Condición de la Mujer de Centro America* – COMMCA) gathered for a regional meeting in San José Costa Rica.

## **4. Objectives**

The project's aims were to contribute to prevention and awareness-raising on the theme of violence towards women by informing key institutional actors and training representatives of Central American non-governmental organizations. The project also focused on deepening understanding of the issue of femicide within Central American society and to make it more visible, through the development of a regional study on the social dynamics of the problem. The results of the study have already begun to be shared with state and non-governmental institutions working on this theme.

The project's immediate expected results included:

- Contributing to knowledge generation on the issue of femicide at the Central American level;
- Strengthening the knowledge, abilities and skills of Horizons of Friendship's partner organizations to address the problem of violence against women among their respective target populations;
- Sensitizing local community leaders from women's, peasant and indigenous organizations and enhancing their knowledge on the problem of violence against women and the various means to address it and prevent it.

### ***First objective:***

The generation of knowledge on the issue of femicide in Central America was attained at two levels:

### ***a) Completion of a regional study and dissemination of its results***

Through the development of this research component, a study was designed and implemented with the participation of three researchers per country. The researchers – all members of the Feminist Network -- selected and analyzed two social dynamics per country in which femicide was a factor and which were emblematic of the phenomenon in their country.

It is important to highlight that during the research process, a learning space was generated between the researchers of the five countries, based on their experiences as researchers and scholars of the phenomena of femicide in the region. Aspects such as the selection of the most representative social dynamics of each country, the definition of adequate research methodologies to learn more about each dynamic, the possible risks encountered during the field work investigating each dynamic, among other themes, generated discussion and analysis among the researchers.

As noted above, the results of the national studies were presented in December 2009 to the Central American Council of Ministers on Women's Affairs (COMMCA). They were also presented in each country during the first half of 2010, thus drawing attention to national and regional dynamics. In March 2010, the Principal Researcher of the project presented the findings to Ms. Rashida Manjoo, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women.

It is expected that the results will provide very valuable elements towards the elaboration of state policies and the design or redesign of state and non-governmental actions to address this problem.

### ***b) Training of social promoters to prevent violence against women***

Another space which enabled the generation and dissemination of knowledge on this problem was the holding of two workshops which brought together 20 representatives of 16 Central American civil society organizations, all partners of Horizons of Friendship. Participants in the workshops analyzed conceptual aspects on gender-based violence, strategies to address the issue, legal aspects, supportive institutions, advocacy and other themes. The overall objective of the workshops was to train participants to become social promoters on the theme of gender-based violence. Once trained, the promoters conducted replicate



sessions sharing the knowledge, skills and abilities they had acquired with their target populations (which included men and women of diverse communities, male and female leaders of peasant and indigenous groups among other populations).

Within these spaces, leaders of the Feminist Network shared their more than 10 years of experience in addressing the problem using methodologies they have specifically developed and which are currently being successfully implemented in the region. These experiences were recorded in a conceptual support document<sup>3</sup> that was shared with the participants and other organizations in the region.

One action that was not contemplated in the project but which was made possible thanks to one of the Guatemalan organizations participating in the workshops, was the elaboration of a flyer on prevention of family violence and the broadcasting of radio spots in Mayan languages, directed to indigenous Guatemalan women. This activity will have a significant impact, as it will reach populations that have not had access to information in their own languages on their right to live without violence.

### ***Second Objective***

The second immediate objective was attained in its entirety through the holding of the two workshops alluded to above.

In August 2008, 20 representatives of 16 Central American non-governmental organizations met in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, under the leadership of the Feminist Network, to reflect on violence against women from a Human Rights and Gender perspective. They also shared knowledge and feelings related to femicide and identified possible activities to undertake in their communities to prevent gender-based violence as well as available resources to support these activities.

Following this first learning space, the participants left with the commitment to design and implement initiatives to address gender-based violence among their target populations, and to undertake a

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<sup>3</sup> CEFEMINA and Horizons of Friendship. [Spanish] Confrontando la Violencia y el Femicidio en Centroamérica [Confronting Violence and Femicide in Central America]. with support from IDRC, CIDA, CAW, Fundation Solstice, OPSEU. 2009.

“mapping” within their zone, region or country of institutional resources and existing policies to address the problem. The results of these tasks were shared at the second workshop.

In the second workshop, which took place in Managua, Nicaragua, the participants deepened their knowledge based on the premises of the Rights Based Gender Approach and its application to daily life, shared experiences of self-care and identification of priority actions to undertake that can contribute towards the eradication of this problem. The participants returned to their countries with the commitment to continue implementing gender-based violence prevention efforts from within their own organizations.

### ***Third Objective***

As was previously mentioned, following the first workshop, the representatives of participating organizations designed and put into practice their acquired knowledge with male and female community leaders, peasant and indigenous groups and institutional authorities, among others. The objective of these activities was to sensitize the population and provide information on the issue of violence against women, ways to prevent it and how to address it. The following is a sample of the different efforts and commitments made by participating organizations<sup>4</sup>.

- **Santa Maria Linguistic Project** (*Proyecto Lingüístico Santa María*), **PLSM**, Guatemala. This Indigenous-led organization works to promote the recovery and recognition of Mayan culture through bilingual intercultural education and anthropological research. The PLSM organized workshops with public officials, specifically from the Justice and Security sector, on the dimension of policies and laws related to gender-based violence, and the responsibilities they are required to assume. They committed to seek funding to give continuity to these workshops and to develop an awareness raising project with the educational community, to develop didactic material and to provide counselling in cases of violence.
- **Association for Health Promotion, Research and Education** (*Asociación para la Promoción, Investigación y Educación en Salud, PIES de Occidente*), Guatemala. PIES de Occidente has, as its main focus of work, the recuperation of the Mayan ancestral

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<sup>4</sup> For more details, see Report of the II Workshop on Violence against Women and Femicide in Central America. [Spanish] 2008

medical system with a focus on environmental and maternal-infant health in indigenous communities in the departments of Quetzaltenango and Totonicapán. This organization selected the objective of contributing to the eradication of violence against women, in particular Mayan women. To this end, they provided training to grassroots organizations (women leaders and midwives) and to public officials; undertook a mapping of institutions in the area that work on this issue, designed a communication strategy on women's rights delivered to children and youth at primary and secondary schools, broadcast radio programs translated into Mayan languages, and prepared informative flyers on family violence aimed at women.

- **Economic Development of Indigenous Mexicans** (*Desarrollo Económico de los Mexicanos Indígenas*), **DESMI**, Mexico. This organization, based in the state of Chiapas, designed and implemented a workshop entitled "Right to live a life free of violence" in the autonomous municipalities, in which women from 19 Chiapas communities participated. As an organization, DESMI has committed to creating a network made up of diverse organizations that work in the area, and to put together an advocacy strategy aimed at increased involvement of state authorities.
- **Centre for Support to Programs and Projects** (*Centro de Apoyo a Programas y Proyectos*), **CAPRI**, Nicaragua. CAPRI places particular emphasis on work with children, youth and local organizations. It works with 12 community groups in the community of Condega, department of Esteli. This organization worked on the elaboration of a gender policy at the municipal level that addresses the problem of gender-based violence. Among pending tasks is the organization of training workshops aimed at women, authorities and municipal committees.
- **Oscar Arnulfo Romero Community Centre** (*Centro Comunitario Oscar Arnulfo Romero*), **CCOAR**, Nicaragua. CCOAR works in the Granada-Nandaime region with women, youth and cooperatives, providing technical and financial support to existing cooperatives (particularly agricultural) and collectives and by developing projects (farming, crafts and bakery). CCOAR also operates a community radio station. The first activity implemented after the training was to raise awareness on the problem of violence against women among the organization's senior management and radio team staff. In addition, they elaborated and broadcast via the

radio station belonging to the centre, campaigns, notes, reports and they provided counselling to women who called the station seeking advice.

- **Carribean Project Association** (*Asociación Proyecto Caribe*), **APC**, Costa Rica. The APC is a community-based organization comprised of Afro-Costa Ricans. It works to combat racism and discrimination, and to achieve equal opportunity for other minorities in Costa Rica. The staff of this organization held meetings with youth groups among the Afro-Costa Rican population in which they addressed the theme of violence against women. As part of their proposals, they are working to become involved in radio production geared to youth living on the Atlantic coast of the country.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1. Methodology of the workshops

The two workshops were facilitated by Professor Ana Carcedo Cabañas, President of the Feminist Centre for Information and Action (CEFEMINA) and member of the Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women. For many years Ms. Carcedo coordinated the Program "*Mujer No Estás Sola*" (Woman: You're Not Alone), to prevent and address the problem of violence against women. This program has developed its own methodology, which is currently being applied in Central American countries by the organizations belonging to the Feminist Network.

The methodology applied in the workshops was "experiential" and promoted a collective reflection based on the experiences of all participants. This enabled effective interaction, and promoted an understanding among participants in which all of the experiences, perceptions, beliefs and opinions expressed were recognized as being equally valid. A completely horizontal relationship was created, which highlighted the "expertise" of each participant inasmuch as each person was speaking from his or her own lived experience. Participants were free to participate or not; respecting all others as within this horizontal relation no one's personal experience can or should be questioned.

Within this methodological approach, the facilitator is not situated in a position of superior knowledge over the other participants. Rather, she prepares the activities to be undertaken and facilitates the process,

contributes her personal vision, along with everyone else, based on her own experiences and from the collective spaces in which she has been involved.

During the workshops, diverse instruments were used that have been validated in the Central American region to address this issue. The application of the instruments is presented in the specific report of each workshop.

## 5.2. Research Methodology Strategy<sup>5</sup>

### 5.2.1. Research Characteristics

The research undertaken was of a **regional, qualitative, retrospective and explanatory** nature:

- It attempted to provide a vision of femicide occurring at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as a problem **affecting the region** as a whole and with its own characteristics, and not merely as a juxtaposition of national realities;
- A **qualitative** approximation was selected, as it is more suitable to enhance knowledge on problems that have already occurred, to explore dynamic objects of study, to reactivate processes and to give voice to the sectors involved;
- The research was **retrospective** because it centred attention on femicides that have occurred in the region since the year 2000;
- It was **explanatory** inasmuch as it attempted to provide responses to the major questions surrounding femicide in the region.

The research was based on case studies (two per country) that provide an illustration of the problem of femicide in three spheres:

- a) The scenarios of femicide in Central America at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century;
- b) The dynamics of state response, that play a fundamental role to either slow down or stimulate the occurrence and rise of femicides;
- c) The role of the media as reinforcing collective imagery that is either adversary or very tolerant towards femicide.

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<sup>5</sup> Source: Red Feminista Centroamericana contra la Violencia hacia las Mujeres. Femicidio en Centroamérica. Propuesta metodológica de la segunda fase: Investigación cualitativa. 2009.

### **5.2.2. Research Process**

The research process responded to the qualitative and regional character of this study. It started as a collective moment, in which the principal researcher, together with researchers in each country, selected the 10 case studies, with a view of ensuring they would be complementary and offer a more extensive and profound vision of the problem of femicide in Central America as well as the possible strategies to address it.

The ensuing phases were undertaken by each researcher or national research team, in close collaboration with the regional coordinator, and based on collective virtual debates. Given the particular dynamics in different countries, it was not possible to progress at the same rhythm in each of the cases. However, the following list highlights the various stages of the research process:

1. Selection of cases to study;
2. Elaboration of the objectives of key questions for each case study;
3. Definition of qualitative methodologies to be applied to each case study, after a bibliographic review of qualitative methodology;
4. Definition of techniques and sources of information for each case study;
5. Elaboration of information collection instruments;
6. Collection of information;
7. Analysis of the information;
8. Elaboration of a national report with the two case studies;
9. Comments and recommendations on national reports from the regional coordinator;
10. Elaboration of final report.

Given that this was a qualitative study, these steps were not viewed as pre-established tasks that needed to be carried out in a rigid and consecutive manner. Rather, they were viewed as moments in the process in which, as the findings unfolded, it was possible to return to previous phases and reformulate aspects of the research.

### 5.2.1. Methodologies

As noted in section 5.2.1, three types of case studies were conducted, which required a combination of methodologies, with a differing emphasis in each case. The methodologies utilized included:

- Social autopsy;
- Critical path analysis;
- Judicial process analysis;
- Organizational analysis;
- Critical discourse analysis.

The methodologies were reviewed and reconsidered from a gender perspective. The following is an explanation of each one of the methodologies applied:

***Social autopsy*** methodology enabled the researchers to reconstruct the process and analyze the elements that contributed to a particular femicide. Through this methodology, the researchers sought to identify conditions or opportune actions that could have prevented it from occurring. For example, for a femicide that occurred within a partner relationship, the researchers examined the history of violence; the manners in which the woman confronted this violence; knowledge of this violence within her environment; responses of the family or neighbourhood; information she had on protection mechanisms or state or private support resources, etc. The purpose was to identify factors that contributed to the femicide (such as knots in this process; adverse conditions that undermined the capacity of the woman to escape from a situation of violence; or aspects to reinforce or opportune actions that would have enabled, or could in the future, avoid a mortal outcome). Social autopsy applied to a group of femicides enables the identification of aspects such as general social conditions and patterns of responses that influence the occurrence of these deaths.

***Critical path analysis*** aims to attain an objective that would be achieved through a process that identifies stimulating and inhibiting factors that enable the process to come to a successful conclusion. For example, applying this methodology in some instances, researchers were able to analyze judicial proceedings of a femicide in which it was expected that the outcome would guarantee justice and prevent impunity for the perpetrator. In such proceedings, stimulating factors to a successful outcome may include aspects such as the resolve of the family; the presence of committed legal representation; support provided by private organizations or public institutions; the seriousness

and preparedness of the prosecutor, etc. Inhibiting factors may include aspects such as weak legislation; lack of willingness to investigate and prosecute; political influence of the perpetrator; the environment created by news media, etc. Applying critical path analysis to various femicides enables the identification of stimulating and inhibiting social factor aspects, and possible strategies to address them.

**Judicial process analysis** focuses primarily on the formal factors and judicial logic of the proceedings in order to identify deficiencies or strengths within them. This enables the identification, for example, of the degree to which the investigation was carried out with rigour; the criteria used by the Public Prosecutor to press criminal charges; construction of the case against the accused; the role of the initial hypothesis and the arguments presented in sentencing. Applying this type of analysis to a set of judicial proceedings enables the identification of possible biases (gender or other types of bias such as social class, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation) in the administration of justice.

**Organizational analysis** proposes an in-depth examination of structures, formal or informal hierarchies and the relational dynamics within a group or a particular type of group. It can be applied, for example, to the study of gangs in order to have a better understanding of this scenario and the particular dynamics of control exerted on women within them, as well as the way that women are treated in their surroundings or within rival gangs.<sup>6</sup>

**Critical discourse analysis** can substantiate with evidence, via discourse analysis, various social or political problems and particularly “to see how discourse contributes to the reproduction of inequality and social injustice determining who has access to discursive structures and acceptable and legitimate communication to society”.<sup>7</sup> It is particularly suitable to analyze the response of the media to cases of femicide, as well as to analyze verdicts.

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<sup>6</sup> An interesting organizational analysis of gangs in Lima is found in: Villegas Alarcón, Francisco. Protestando por no ser ciudadanos. Los jóvenes pandilleros de Lima a fines de los 90. Lima: Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos. [http://www.cybertesis.edu.pe/sisbib/2004/villegas\\_af/html/index-frames.html](http://www.cybertesis.edu.pe/sisbib/2004/villegas_af/html/index-frames.html)

<sup>7</sup> Van Dijk, Teun. 1999. El análisis crítico del discurso en *Anthropos* 186, septiembre-octubre 1999. Barcelona. <http://www.discursos.org/oldarticles/El%20an%20E1lisis%20cr%EDtico%20del%20discurso.pdf>



### **5.2.2. Information collection**

For each case study, once the methodologies to be applied were determined, the most efficient information gathering techniques were selected. The following were some of the techniques used in this study:

- In-depth Interview
- Ethnographic Interview
- Focus Group
- Bibliographic Review
- Hemerographic (newspaper, media) Review
- Review of official documents

Each of these techniques included identification of the sources of information, as well as an analysis of the quality of the information provided. In some cases, analysis was conducted previously or at the very beginning of the information gathering process. This was the case, for example, with the review of media reports, which required testing the instruments to review the information, anticipate possible gaps, and above all identify the reliability of the information depending on its source (the sensationalist media have a tendency to invent information). In other cases the analysis of the quality of the information was a product of the overall analysis and emerged as one of many results, for example, when it was noted that close relatives of a murdered woman spoke very little about a particular aspect or when the media recorded detailed aspects related to the victim but not of the perpetrator.

In each case, it was necessary to elaborate specific instruments to record the information, attempt to test it in simulations or review it after the first applications in order to improve or adjust these instruments.

### **5.2.3. Analysis of the Information**

Given that this is a qualitative research study, the categories of analysis are emergent, which is to say, they should appear out of the information gathered, and not necessarily should be established *a priori*. This being said, given the overall objectives and the research questions, it was nonetheless possible to identify from the outset broad categories of analysis that enabled an initial processing of the information. Additional categories or sub-categories of analysis could subsequently be identified, enabling thus a reformulation of the initial structure. Some of the broad categories and subcategories of analysis were:

- *Gender power relations*: formal power structures, informal structures, control dynamics and autonomy;
- *State responses to femicide*: investigation, prosecution, punishment, protection and impunity;
- *Social responses to femicide*: tolerance, re-victimization and social support networks.

#### **5.2.4. Difficulties encountered**

One of the biggest limitations confronted during the research process and which contributed to a delay in the schedule, was the coup d'état that happened in Honduras in June 2009. This situation forced the national researcher to seek refuge in a neighbouring country due to persecution. Additionally the other researchers concentrated their efforts during this period to support their Honduran sisters and to organize diverse actions from their countries of origin.

Likewise, some of the cases initially selected had to be changed for various reasons. One of the cases to be researched jointly by the researchers in Costa Rica and Nicaragua, specifically the death of a Nicaraguan woman in Costa Rican territory, had to be substituted, as it was impossible to locate her relatives in Nicaragua. In another case relating to a gang-related killing, the focus of the study had to be changed as it was determined that it was exposing the national team to danger.

## **6. Project Activities**

The following provides details of the activities undertaken towards attainment of each result.

***Result No. 1: Contribute to knowledge creation on the problem of femicide in Central America***

Activities:

- a. Design of a regional study on the dynamics that impact cases of femicide in Central America.
- b. Research of case studies on femicide in each Central American country.

- c. Elaboration of research reports for each country and one regional report.
- d. Publication and dissemination of country and regional reports.
- e. Coordination and implementation of an event in each country to disseminate results.
- f. Distribution of published reports to key stakeholders in each country.
- g. Coordination and implementation of training presentations in El Salvador and Honduras directed towards key institutional stakeholders regarding legal advances addressing the problem of femicide.
- h. Presentation of regional research results to the Central American Council of Ministers on Women's Affairs (COMMCA) in San José, Costa Rica.
- i. Presentation of regional research results to the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (*Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional* (AECI) in Madrid.

**Result No. 2:** *Partner organizations of Horizons of Friendship have knowledge, ability and skills to address the problem of violence against women among their target populations*

Activities:

- a. Design, publication and distribution of a conceptual document on violence against women and femicide that serves as a resource to address this issue in the region.
- b. Design, coordination and implementation of two regional workshops to provide training on knowledge, abilities and skills to address the problem of violence against women, with the participation of 16 Central American development organizations, partners of Horizons of Friendship.
- c. Replication of acquired knowledge and workshop activities by participants for their own local target populations.
- d. Elaboration of reports and minutes of the events.

**Result No. 3:** *Local community leaders, women's, peasant and indigenous groups are sensitized and have increased knowledge on the problem of violence against women and the means to address and prevent it.*

Activities:

- a. Design and replication of awareness-raising and prevention initiatives to local target populations by representatives of Horizons of Friendship partner organizations who participated in

- the first regional workshop. (i.e. workshop replication by partners to their local target populations)
- b. Implementation of workshops by each organization as planned, designed and approved by workshop facilitators.
  - c. Application of pre and post tests to participants of the target populations to measure changes resulting from the training initiatives of partner organizations.
  - d. Elaboration of reports on implementation of local awareness-raising and prevention activities of replicated workshops.
  - e. Elaboration by project facilitators of a final report on the local initiatives.

The following important lessons emerged from the implementation and management of project activities.

- a. The establishment of a strategic alliance between *Horizons of Friendship* and the *Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women* maximized the effectiveness of project activities. Benefits of the alliance for the *Feminist Network* include: attainment of deeper and more specialized knowledge of issues of violence against women; strengthening of capacities for its member organizations to convene; improved abilities to identify and contact key actors in each country and increased prestige and recognition of the network's initiatives in the region. With respect to alliance benefits for *Horizons of Friendship*, these include: increased knowledge of the work undertaken by Central American development organizations; improved convening capacity with these organizations; enhanced ability to access resources to enable the project's implementation; gained experience in the communication of initiatives to the region and increased recognition of its work in Central America.
- b. The establishment of this alliance provided strengthening of, and complemented efforts by the Feminist Network and Horizons thus eliminating the duplication of efforts.
- c. In the realization of the regional study, the fact that the research team was the same as that of the previous qualitative regional study was a crucial element. This allowed for the congruity and accuracy of research information, and a consistency in the study of each case of femicide.
- d. The constitution of a Technical Committee, as a support structure for project coordination, greatly facilitated implementation of its

activities. The committee is made up of the Executive Director of Horizons of Friendship, the Coordinator of the Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women – Costa Rica Chapter, and the Coordinator of the Regional Gender Project, who assumed the duty of overall project coordination.

- e. The coordination between Horizon's partner organizations proved effective in the implementation of the project's activities. This coordination was first initiated six years ago by Horizons. This organizational structure consists of an Institutional Gender Leader in each partner organization and a National Monitor in each country. The Institutional Gender Leader was responsible for guiding her/his organization in the implementation of the programmed activities, with support from the General Project Coordinator.

## 7. Project Outputs

The following outputs were elaborated through the project's implementation:

### ***Research and Publications:***

- *Regional Research Report: Femicide in Central America – case studies on social dynamics.* [Spanish] *Informe de investigación regional: Femicidio en Centro América: Estudio de casos sobre las dinámicas sociales.* Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women & Horizons of Friendship. 2010.
- Published Document [Spanish]: *Confrontando la Violencia y el Femicidio en Centroamérica.* (*Confronting Violence and Femicide in Central America*). By CEFEMINA & Horizons of Friendship with support from IDRC, CIDA, CAW, Fondation SOLSTICE, OPSEU. 2009.
- *Report Workshop #1 on Violence against Women and Femicide in Central America,* [Spanish] (*Memoria I Taller sobre Violencia contra las Mujeres y Femicidio en Centroamérica.*) Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women & Horizons of Friendship, Guatemala, 2008.
- *Report on Workshop #2 on Violence against Women and Femicide in Central America,* [Spanish] (*Memoria II Taller sobre Violencia contra las Mujeres y Femicidio en Centroamérica.*) Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women – Costa Rica Chapter & Horizons of Friendship. Managua, 2008.

- *Progress Report on Research Action Project to Combat Violence against Women and Femicide in Central America*, Horizons of Friendship, February 2009.
- Flyer on *Prevention of Family Violence* (in Spanish) and radio broadcasts in Mayan languages (Mam & K'iche') directed at Guatemalan indigenous women.

### **Capacity Building:**

- 20 people from 16 non-governmental organizations, partners with Horizons of Friendship, participated in *Workshop #1 on Violence against Women and Femicide in Central America*. They enhanced their knowledge, abilities and skills in the prevention of and the attention to the problem of violence against women.
- 18 people from 14 non-governmental organizations, partners with Horizons of Friendship, participated in *Workshop #2 on Violence against Women and Femicide in Central America*. As in the case of the first workshop, they increased their capacities in the understanding, prevention and education issues of violence against women.
- 16 Central American researchers (3 per country and one research coordinator) participated in the realization of a regional study on the social dynamics that impact the issue of femicide in the region. This participatory process strengthened their research capacities.
- Senior Management of the Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women & Horizons of Friendship strengthened their research and coordination abilities.
- 150 people of government and non-governmental organizations in Central America broadened their knowledge on the issue of femicide in Central America.
- 40 representatives of diverse governmental organizations in El Salvador and Honduras received training on the social dynamics that impact cases of femicide in Central America.
- Approximately 350 women members of non-governmental organizations belonging to the Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women strengthened their communication abilities and improved their knowledge on the theme of femicide in Central America
- Representatives of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI) participated in Madrid, Spain in a presentation of the results of the regional study on femicide in Central America. February 2010.
- Horizons of Friendship improved its ability to coordinate the implementation of an inter-institutional regional project.

- Horizons of Friendship established cooperation links with new donor agencies and strengthened its fundraising abilities.

### ***Political Advocacy:***

- 5 Women's Affairs Ministers (members of the Central American Council of Ministers on Women's Affairs COMMCA) and the First Secretary of the Canadian Embassy in Costa Rica broadened their knowledge on the problem of femicide in Central America through the presentation of study results. San José Costa Rica, December 8, 2009.
- The Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women submitted a written document with policy recommendations to COMMCA. San José, Costa Rica, December 8, 2009.
- A delegation of 17 Canadian citizens comprised of individuals and representatives from various civil society organizations and universities broadened their knowledge on the issue of femicide in Central America through attendance at a presentation of the regional study. An ensuing opportunity for reflection was created. San José, Costa Rica, February 8, 2010.
- A public presentation of study results in each of the five countries as well as in Canada enabled the increased knowledge and awareness of the issue of femicide. At each event both printed and CD copies of the investigation were distributed. Attendees receiving copies of the study included State and civil society representatives. A summary of the presentations made in each country, by country are as follows:
  - **Nicaragua:** A presentation of the study results was held in Managua on May 19<sup>th</sup> 2010. It was attended by approximately 100 people. Attendees included government representatives, members of civil society organizations and family and friends of victims of femicide. The presentation was preceded by a press conference with most major national media present. They widely disseminated the event and in some cases published feature reports on femicide. Participants were particularly impressed by messages delivered by two sisters of femicide victims who were both subjects of case studies in the research study.
  - **Guatemala:** A presentation of the study was made on June 1, 2010 in Guatemala City during a workshop with approximately 40 representatives of state and civil society organizations in attendance. This event was organized by

the *Grupo Guatemalteco de Mujeres* (GGM), a member of the Central American Network against Violence towards Women.

- **El Salvador:** A public forum entitled “Violence against Women: Predecessor to Femicide” was organized in San Salvador, El Salvador on June 4, 2010 with the participation of over 100 people. The event was co-organized by ISDEMU, La Colectiva Feminista and CEMUJER, in collaboration with CEFEMINA, Cordaid, Interamerican Human Rights Institute, Trocaire, AECID and Horizons of Friendship. The one-day event was divided into two workshops, with the first on the theme of “Violence against Women: Current Trends with Historical Roots”. During this session presentations and discussions focused on concepts of Violence against Women and Human Rights and its evolution within the national context. There was a discussion of public policies and an analysis of the scenarios of femicide in El Salvador as well as the presentation of the Bill “Integral Law for a Life free of Violence against Women” which included a discussion of its current status before the Legislative Assembly. The second workshop, entitled “Femicide: A State Concern culminated with the launching of the Permanent Tribunal against Violence towards Women and Femicide. It was presided by Dr. Victoria Marina Velázquez de Avilés, Salvadoran Minister of Labour and by CEMUJER representatives. The event received good press coverage and organizers were very satisfied by its outcome, stating that “This type of activities contribute to the process of dissemination, awareness-raising, social and political engagement that are needed to foster changes in attitudes and cultural practices which maintain unequal structural and discriminatory power relations against women.”
- **Costa Rica:** Study results were presented on June 16<sup>th</sup> 2010 in San Jose at an event attended by approximately 50 people. Those in attendance included representatives of the Legislative Assembly, Judiciary, National Women’s Institute, public and private universities, various NGOs, university students, law specialists, members of the National Network to Combat Violence against Women and the public at large. The audience expressed surprise and concern towards the dimensions of femicide occurring within Costa Rica. Following the presentation participants debated what should be done now to halt a possible increase. The attendance of many State representatives brought prominence to the



event and deepened the discussion. Organizers were pleased with the public reaction and heightened interest by government officials.

- **Honduras:** Results of the study were presented on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010 in a public event in Tegucigalpa. The results of the regional study were delivered by the project's research coordinator, Ana Carcedo and the national researchers involved in the project.
- **Canada:** In May, the project coordinator, María Luisa Preinfalk presented the research and project results at various events organized by Horizons of Friendship. A public presentation was made in Cobourg on May 21<sup>st</sup> and on May 25th presentations were made in Ottawa to representatives of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) as well as to a group representing various Canadian NGOs held at the offices of Amnesty International. On May 26th a presentation was made to representatives of IDRC.

It should be noted that the meeting held with representatives of Canadian sister organizations (among them Amnesty International, Peace Brigades International, Oxfam Canada) and the ongoing socialization of the project and the findings of the report undertaken by Horizons of Friendship (principally through its participation as an active member of the Americas Policy Group of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation) has already led to expressions of a desire to enhance inter-institutional collaboration in Canada on this theme.

## 8. Project Outcomes

The training component of this project fostered the education of representatives of 16 Mesoamerican non-governmental organizations in knowledge and skills to prevent and address the issue of violence against women. In turn, the representatives relayed the educational process to the target populations in their respective communities. This multiplier effect strengthened significantly the capacity for increased awareness of violence against women as well as the ability to provide proper support to the victims and to improve legal and political advocacy on their behalf.

The development of this training component along with the research study has provided partner organizations with good documentation and

a solid framework to confront issues of violence against women and femicide.

The study has resulted in a greater understanding of femicide in Central America and of the current rise in the number of cases. As well, the study has contributed to the development of strategies and effective actions for its prevention and eventual eradication. At an immediate level the results of the study provided the following elements:

- a. The different scenarios of femicide existing in the region, their characteristics, dynamics and social roots.
- b. State responses to femicides.
- c. Significant social responses towards femicides.
- d. The role of the media in the socio-cultural responses towards femicide.
- e. Central aspects of possible prevention strategies towards femicide according to the particular scenarios.

The study brought to light the dynamics of power and control which the perpetrators of femicides exert over their victims and of the diversity of the femicide scenarios themselves. The responses to the abuse faced by women within their own communities and overall regional and state responses were also studied, along with role the media played in communicating femicide cases. These findings will help in the design of more effective prevention, advocacy and communications strategies.

Overall, the research results concludes the need to design both 1) general strategies for addressing common elements of all femicide cases and 2) more specific strategies for each of the different femicide scenarios.

The qualitative information obtained from this study complemented previous quantitative research conducted by the Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women. The coordination of efforts between Horizons of Friendship and the Feminist Network enhanced understanding of the many social factors related to the issue. The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provided a more complete panorama of the situation and enhanced capabilities for the development of policy influencing and ensuing decision-making.

The establishment of a strategic alliance between Horizons of Friendship and the Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women was a key aspect of this project, in terms of both the training and the research components. On the part of Horizons of Friendship, the

organization brought its knowledge of development organizations of the region, its convening capacity of NGOs, and its experience in project management and fundraising. On the part of the Feminist Network, it brought its specialized knowledge on the theme of violence in the region, its capacity to convene women's organizations at the regional level and its ability to identify and contact key actors in each country. The establishment of this link strengthened and complemented efforts undertaken by both organizations, eliminating duplication of efforts.

One of the major obstacles faced in completion of the project was the incidence of the coup d'état in Honduras in June 2009. The event led to delays in research and training activities. However, with the coordinated efforts of project participants, events were rescheduled and eventually completed.

With respect to carrying out research activities, some minor challenges were encountered. Researchers faced two situations which compelled them to change the selection of case studies: a) the lack of documentary information and key informants, and b) the personal risk in the research of one of the cases.

A significant lesson that emerged from this project was the importance of developing strategic alliances between organizations to maximize the capacities of each. Neither Horizons of Friendship, nor the Feminist Network, acting independently, could have obtained the same results in the given time frame.

The other contributing success factor of this project was the economic support that was received throughout the course of the project. The financial contributions from each of the donor organizations made it possible to complete the research and training activities and to disseminate findings through presentations and various communications media.

## **9. General Evaluation and Recommendations**

A major success factor of this project was the alliance between three key actors. The first two actors would be the development organizations in the region which understand the Central American context, namely, the Feminist Network, and Horizons of Friendship. A third actor would be the donor organizations and individuals. The coordinated efforts of this alliance led to maximizing the use of resources dedicated to the project. The Feminist Network's team of researchers are highly qualified and experienced. Their previous backgrounds in conducting research on the

theme of violence against women provided for a thorough, efficient and accurate study.

With the success of the alliance on this project, it can be recommended that for future projects, we continue to seek additional organizations, groups and individuals who have, on the one hand, complimentary knowledge and skill sets but at the same time, have similar goals and values on important issues such the one addressed in this project.

As noted earlier in this report, the ongoing and active engagement of Horizons of Friendship with other sister organizations in Canada (faith-based organizations, labour, non-governmental organizations, etc.) has led to increased financial support for this initiative. But it has also laid the groundwork for synergies and increased inter-institutional collaboration among Horizons and other organizations in Canada. For example, we have discussed with Amnesty International some similarities between the Stolen Sisters Campaign (carried out jointly by Amnesty International and the Native Women's Association of Canada) and the issue of femicide in Central America, with the possibility of inter-institutional collaboration. For its part, Oxfam Canada has expressed an interest in greater collaboration as it does provide funding to the Feminist Network in Central America.

The task of eradicating the problem of violence and femicide in Central America has just begun. There are still many gaps to fill and actions to undertake. These include:

- Deepening the awareness-raising efforts and the understanding of the causes of violence against women;
- Training judicial agents and administrators of justice in management of cases involving the killing of women and the application of justice;
- Creating and improving current legislation;
- Creating protocols of care towards women victims of violence;
- Improving access to justice for women, and designing strategies to stop the rise in violence in each one of the identified scenarios.

Central America cannot develop if 50% of its population suffers violence and if this violence causes more deaths of innocent women.

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## 11. Appendices

<b>Appendix A</b>	<i>Regional Research Report: [Spanish] Ni olvidamos, ni aceptamos: Femicidio en Centro América. (We neither forget nor accept: Femicide in Central America). Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women &amp; Horizons of Friendship. 2010.</i>
<b>Appendix B:</b>	Published document: [Spanish]: <i>Confrontando la Violencia y el Femicidio en Centroamérica. (Confronting Violence and Femicide in Central America). By CEFEMINA &amp; Horizons of Friendship with support from IDRC, CIDA, CAW, Fondation SOLSTICE, OPSEU. 2009.</i>
<b>Appendix C:</b>	<i>Report Workshop #1 on Violence against Women and Femicide in Central America, [Spanish] (Memoria I Taller sobre Violencia contra las Mujeres y Femicidio en Centroamérica.) Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women &amp; Horizons of Friendship, Guatemala, 2008.</i>
<b>Appendix D:</b>	<i>Report on Workshop #2 on Violence against Women and Femicide in Central America, [Spanish] (Memoria II Taller sobre Violencia contra las Mujeres y Femicidio en Centroamérica). Central American Feminist Network against Violence towards Women – Costa Rica Chapter &amp; Horizons of Friendship. Managua, 2008.</i>
<b>Appendix E:</b>	Flyer on Prevention of Family Violence (in Spanish)
<b>Appendix F:</b>	Media coverage
<b>Appendix G:</b>	Photos